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Office for Information
Technology Policy

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ALA American Library Association

April 28, 1997

Reed E. Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

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MAY 2 1997
Federal Communications Commission
Office of General Counsel

Re: CC Docket No: 96-45, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

Honorable Chairman Hundt,

As we approach the deadline for the final FCC ruling in CC 96-45, the American Library Association would like to reaffirm its strong support for the Recommendations of the Joint Board on Universal Service. These recommendations represent a fair, considered approach to solving the challenge of moving America's schools and libraries into the information age. At the same time, the recommendations provide fair, reasonable, and predictable burdens on carriers, allowing them to plan their business accordingly.

Enclosed are a number of articles which have appeared in recent months which deal with the issue of connections to the information superhighway for schools and libraries. The strong public support which this proposal has received from the public and the press shows that the American people clearly support the idea of using universal service funds to connect schools and libraries to the future.

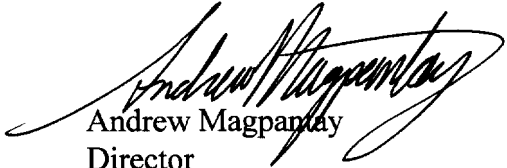
In fact, a recent public opinion poll conducted for the National School Boards Association reports that the public supports providing discounts on services to schools. The same poll shows that Americans from all walks of life are willing to support the additional costs that will be incurred to make effective use of advanced telecommunications technologies.

Despite the public's support for moving into the future, however, schools and libraries have been unable to do so -- largely because of the prohibitively high cost of telecommunications services. Providing discounts on these services will help schools and libraries to meet the needs of all students and patrons.

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On behalf of the millions of students and library patrons who stand to benefit from the outcome of the universal service proceeding, I would like to thank you again for your work for schools and libraries in this proceeding.

Sincerely,



Andrew Magpantay
Director
Office for Information Technology Policy
American Library Association

Enclosure

CC: Reed Hundt, Chairman, FCC
Susan Ness, Commissioner, FCC
Rachelle Chong, Commissioner, FCC
Ken McClure, Vice Chairman, Missouri PSC
Julia Johnson, Commissioner, Florida PSC
Sharon Nelson, Chairman, Washington UTC
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Lee Palogyi, Washington UTC
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Jim McConnaughey, NTIA
Barbara Pryor, Office of Senator Jay Rockefeller

12A • Saturday, April 12/ 1997 — THE TENNESSEAN

EDITORIALS

THE TENNESSEAN
A Gannett Newspaper

Plugging in at the library

CONGRESS did the right thing last year when it added a provision to the telecommunications bill calling for significant discounts on a variety of telecommunication services to libraries and schools.

Federal regulators now must keep the teeth in that provision.

One of the cornerstones of the massive 1996 Telecommunications Act is a provision calling for universal service. Congress wanted to assure as it was reviewing and restructuring a whole range of telecommunication services that families and individuals with limited resources would not be denied access to those services.

One of the crucial elements of universal service, as it appears in the new law, is a provision giving libraries and schools discounted telecommunications rates.

The Federal Communications Commission is now in the process of writing rules that will put the law's provisions to work. Among the many details to be worked out are exactly how the discounts should be calculated and the terms and conditions of those discounts.

The FCC is also considering deeper discounts for libraries and schools in high-cost areas, such as rural communities, as well as in low-income areas.

The notion behind these discounts is obvious. Libraries and schools, which are supported by taxpayers, get similar discounts on other materials. Despite this nation's increasing dependence on telecommunications services, including the

Law calls for discounts for libraries, schools

Internet, many families, individuals, students and small businesses cannot afford to be plugged in at home or at work. That current lack of universal service is exactly why it is vital that every public library and school takes full advantage of telecommunications.

When libraries and schools are plugged in, everyone will have access.

Despite the provision's merit, some representatives of the telecommunications industry are now balking about the size of the discount. If the FCC follows one internal recommendation, the aggregate discount to libraries and schools would be about \$2.25 billion annually.

On its face, that seems like a huge discount to exact from one industry. But the telecommunications industry itself is huge and extremely profitable. It can afford the discounts.

Moreover, that money will act as an investment in telecommunications in the future. Many of the students and library patrons who become acquainted with on-line information services will eventually go on line in their own homes and offices.

This discount isn't a give-away. It's an investment. And it's also a commitment to democracy that the federal government needs to keep. ■

Atlantic City Press

PUBLIC ACCESS TO COMPUTERS

N.J. needs more

When the New Jersey Department of Personnel eliminated its monthly jobs bulletin last year, it gave the following explanation: The information about available civil-service positions could easily be accessed on the Internet.

Sure — for unemployed people who can afford a computer and an Internet hookup. Or are lucky enough to have a nearby public library with a computer — or a computer that doesn't take a week to reserve.

This has been National Library Week. And library activists have wisely focused public attention on what should be the top priority in this area: Getting more public access to the Internet.

But putting computers in libraries is costly. The budget news this year is better than expected. Gov. Christie Whitman's proposed funding for public libraries remains level at about \$13 million — rather than being cut, as the library community had feared.

Still, that doesn't mean the news is good. In 1989, library funding was \$16 million. And the need for computers was less intense a decade ago.

The state Department of Personnel's action says it all: Goodbye, paper; hello, cyberspace. But while the state is putting more and more information online, it needs to ensure that everyone in New Jersey has reasonably convenient access to the Internet. In New Jersey, only 40 percent of the population has home computers.

The New Jersey Library Association is asking the state to find a way to appropriate \$10 million to invest in computers for libraries. That's not unreasonable.

New Jersey's budget has been so tightened by ill-advised tax cuts and years of one-shot budgeting that flat funding has become good news. But in the area of public access to computers, it's not good enough. All New Jersey residents deserve access to an information-highway on-ramp.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: "The believing we do something when we do nothing is the first illusion of tobacco."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

OPINION

IN OUR OPINION

State should forge more library Internet links

The New Jersey Library Association's Log-On Day yesterday highlighted a worthy cause: the importance of connecting all libraries in the state to the Internet.

The access to computerized information all over the world that the Internet provides to computer users is wonderful. A computer user with Internet access can check out an out-of-state college's entrance requirements, read an article from a newspaper published 3,000 miles away or do extensive research for a school paper. But many families struggling to get by from one paycheck to the next find a home computer not yet within their financial reach.

"As more and more information is becoming available only on the Internet," Lynn Randall, president of the library association, said, "those without access to computers are quickly becoming disenfranchised in the information society . . . Libraries have always been the great equalizer of information for the public and must continue that role in the electronic age."

An example of information now available on computer is the New Jersey Department of Personnel's listings for Civil Service job testing.

"That's the only way you can get them now," said Priscilla Gardner, manager of the Miller Branch of the Jersey City Public Library.

With the help of city officials, Gardner's branch library developed a terrific computer center with eight computers that have Internet access. Gardner said that center is busy all day long, with job hunters and other adults, as well as high school and grammar school students, using the computers.

At the Bayonne Free Public Library and Cultural Center, where computer resources have been aided by state grants, there has been plenty of use of computers that provide Internet access via the Baytech Corp., and the library will soon be providing access through three more computers at its main building and one at each of its two branches.

"It's not a frill anymore," Bayonne library official Joanne Corbett said. "It's a necessity."

She's right.

To aid the development of such access at more libraries, especially in low-income and moderate-income neighborhoods, a proposed technology bond issue merits the support of both elected officials and the public.

In addition, the state should make sure it provides sufficient operating aid to help libraries develop and maintain these links while continuing to supply the standard reference materials and freely circulating books that have been so important to education and literacy in New Jersey for generations.

Officials of local libraries in Hudson County should be alert to take advantage of whatever grants the state does offer.

IN YOUR OPINION

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Our View: Editorials

Getting to the resources

Libraries need help to upgrade computer access

At public libraries throughout New Jersey yesterday, patrons were urged to log onto the Internet, assuming their local branch had Internet access. Most still do not.

Library users in Monmouth and Ocean counties were among the more fortunate. Log-On Day gave them the opportunity to make use of the advanced information technology already in place at two of the state's best library systems.

The special event was scheduled as part of National Library Week and the New Jersey Library Association's effort to focus attention on the budget problems of many of the state's 312 municipal and county libraries. Support for public libraries, in local, county and state budgets, falls far short of reflecting the value of libraries to New Jersey residents, 60 percent of whom are regular patrons.

Ocean County's system of 19 libraries is the most heavily used in the state. The number of books and other material borrowed from Monmouth County's main library has more than doubled in the past decade. Both county systems have enjoyed strong support from county freeholders, allowing the libraries to computerize their catalogs and to provide access to the Internet and other on-line services.

Smaller municipal libraries, however, have not been as lucky. The Long Branch library, for example, has just one computer terminal capable of accessing the Internet. Its use is limited to library staffers. At some libraries, appointments must be made far in advance to use the few computers available. Other libraries, especially in New Jersey's urban areas, have no computers with modems to allow patrons to access the Internet.

The lack of computer resources in New Jersey libraries is especially disturbing at a time when the amount of information available online is exploding. Some federal funds are being used to try to get at least one Internet access point into every library in New Jersey by 2000. That's far from adequate.

State aid for public libraries, which helps pay for operating costs and materials, has declined in the past decade from \$16.3 million in 1987-88 to a proposed \$13.1 million in 1997-98. Although the Whitman administration proposes holding library spending steady in the coming year, that will allow libraries to do no more than hold their own.

Unless public libraries are allowed to become major entrance ramps to the information superhighway, a large segment of the state's population will be denied access to vast amounts of important material. Not everyone can afford an elaborate home computer or the cost of accessing online services. Today, more than 60 percent of New Jersey homes still lack computers.

The role of the public library as a great equalizer in the quest for knowledge deserves re-emphasizing during this National Library Week. Knowledge, as always, is power. Giving people access to that power means giving them a chance to succeed.

Having the ability to access vast amounts of information from remote locations is a wonder that many people are just now beginning to appreciate. Rather than make libraries a thing of the past, however, the volume of data now available increases the need for libraries — and their staffs — to bring order to what easily could become information chaos.

Residents of Monmouth and Ocean counties should rejoice that their county freeholders have had the foresight to develop fine public libraries. As citizens of New Jersey however, area residents should not forget that others in the state need access to the same information resources.

That's why the governor and the Legislature should establish, as the state library association has proposed, a trust fund to finance capital investments in public libraries. Surely if a penny from some state fee or tax were set aside for libraries, enough money would be available to make every public library the information resource it ought to be. Under the budget proposed by Gov. Whitman, state aid to libraries amounts to 96 cents for each state resident.

Anyone who has doubts about the usefulness of the Internet or a library's ability to harness its power should take time this week to make a visit, either real or virtual. Information about the Ocean County library system is available by calling (908) 349-6200 or the individual branches, or by accessing the library's World Wide Web site: <http://netra.oceancounty.lib.nj.us>

Monmouth County Library information is available by calling (908) 431-7220 or by accessing the library's World Wide Web site: <http://shore.co.monmouth.nj.us/library>

The public library remains essential to democracy, treating all as equals and giving all an opportunity to visit and learn.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 1997

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Entry points needed

New Jerseyans are in danger of being left behind on the information superhighway because there aren't enough on-ramps.

Less than 40 percent of the population of this state has access to the Internet on personal computers at home or work. The logical place for the rest of us to log on is at our public libraries — the institutions that for two centuries have been the repositories of the information the people need to better their lives and thereby make the nation stronger.

But most of the state's 312 municipal and county libraries don't have the funds to computerize. A survey last year by the State Library found that of the 194 libraries that responded, only 38 offered public access to the Internet and 25 of them are in Morris County. The demand is heavy in those places: at the South Brunswick, Cherry Hill and Cumberland County libraries, patrons must reserve an hour of computer time at least a week in advance.

The state budget for libraries, which was \$16,309,000 in 1989, was cut to \$13,112,000 in 1991 and has stayed at that reduced level ever since, including in Gov. Whitman's proposed 1997-98 budget. This amount includes \$7.6 million that must be used for books and tapes, personnel and maintenance. Any money spent on computers for the public use has to come from what's left over. There's no additional funding for technology.

The need is more than a theoretical one. In the past year the state Department of Personnel stopped printing its Job Bulletin, which was a source of governmental employment opportunities for thousands, and began offering this information in electronic form only. Tax information, health information and small business opportunities are among the resources that now are available only on the Internet. Beyond these things is the mountain of general information that's now available on-line for the researchers, students and browsers who constitute a library's clientele.

As Patricia A. Tumulty of the New Jersey Library Association points out, the Legislature created the Transportation Trust Fund to ensure that New Jersey's roads, bridges and trains will be ready for the future. It should have an Information Trust Fund to make certain the state's people can reach the information resources they need. This week — National Library Week — would be an appropriate time for our lawmakers to resolve to establish such a fund.

Science & Technology

EDUCATION

MINDSHARE IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

So Microsoft and Toshiba are scrambling to stoke the education market

At first, Anthony Amato thought someone was playing a bad joke. The community superintendent of New York City School District No. 6 in Harlem had flown all the way to Redmond, Wash., to check out Microsoft Corp.'s plan to put thousands of notebook computers in schools. When he arrived, he was shown a video of upper-crust Australian schoolchildren using Microsoft spreadsheets.

"Here was this beautiful school with well-manicured children talking in prim English accents," recalls Amato, whose district spans some tough streets in Harlem. "God knows what would happen if our kids walked down the street with notebooks under their arms," he remembers thinking. But that evening, Amato had an abrupt change of heart. Whatever the challenges, he decided, his students deserved the latest technology.

A year later, parents in District No. 6 are thanking him for the decision. On any given morning, 20 fifth-graders in the Harlem pilot program are plotting graphs on Toshiba notebook computers using Microsoft Excel and clipping them into Word documents. Parents are learning how to use the computers, too—and splitting the cost with the school. "We've had overwhelming support from the community," says Amato, beaming.

He's not the only one smiling: Fifty-one other American pilot schools are getting upbeat results in the same program, called "Anytime Anywhere Learning." Kathy Klock, curriculum director at the Snohomish School District in Washington State, says engineers who visited one of her fifth grade classes were blown away by PowerPoint presentations given by young students. Not surprisingly, Microsoft and its

co-organizer—Toshiba America—are also enthusiasts. "This program enhances critical thinking skills, and the way children analyze data," says Kathryn Yates, director for K-12 at Microsoft's Education Customer Unit, which supports teachers with online materials and technical help. Adds Toshiba America program manager Thomas J. Healey: "The children learn to work with tools that

Anytime Anywhere participants address this issue by coaching children on how to care for computers. In Harlem, parents help patrol children going to and from school. So far, none of the 52 pilot schools has reported a case of theft or loss.

Schools and parents in the Anytime Anywhere program purchase or lease their notebooks from Toshiba resellers.



SUITE SUCCESS Fifth graders at New York's Mott Hall School master Microsoft Office

they will use throughout their lives."

As the program gears up, Microsoft could take its biggest step yet outside the business market. But there will be hurdles. Historically, Apple has dominated the school market and still holds a 51% stake, according to a survey by New York's IDC/Link Inc. Apple executives are skeptical about notebooks in schools. "They're not rugged enough," says Apple Computer Inc. marketing manager Robert H. Kondrk. Instead, he's offering schools a sturdy version of the Newton PDA called E-Mate for \$699.

Hardware and software are discounted, as are service and insurance contracts. The only real guidelines in the program: Notebooks must be high-end models that the students have available 24 hours a day. And students must learn their way around a business suite called Microsoft Office (table, page 92).

STALLED HOME MARKET. If all this sounds a little self-serving—coming from Toshiba and Microsoft—it probably is. Penetration of PCs in American homes is stalled at about 40%, so hardware makers like Toshiba are scrambling to seed new markets. Believe it or not, Microsoft faces a similar challenge. Its hugely successful Office package—worth

Science & Technology

about \$3.3 billion last year—has close to 90% of the market for business suites, according to International Data Corp., a market research company. But growth isn't accelerating. "Where do you get new users?" asks IDC consumer software analyst Mary Loffredo Wardley.

CONSTRAINTS. Enter the education market, which bears a striking resemblance to the corporate market. "Schools have line-items that say 'software,'" says Wardley. "Money is pre-budgeted, and decisions to purchase are made at a high level." The Anytime Anywhere approach also suits school agendas, she says, because the National Bureau of Educational Standards is asking teachers to go beyond math games to programs that impart higher-order skills. "When you use graphing software, you see relationships, and you can make predictions," Wardley says.

Indeed, Microsoft's timing seems perfect. The Washington (D.C.)-based Software Publishers Assn. expects U.S. schools to pump about \$4 billion into software and computer gear this year. Software will likely account for just \$494 million of the total. But the number is bound to grow. Last October, Congress allocated \$200 million for the President's new Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, aimed at upgrading technology in schools.

State and city matching grants will double or treble the total grant value. Big chunks of Title One antipoverty grants are earmarked for the same purpose. And on May 8, the Federal Communications Commission is expected to mandate discounts of up to 90% on Internet access for schools. After that, districts may try to get more Net-ready PCs on school desks.

This gush of grants and discounts springs from a strong bipartisan movement to prepare students for the high-tech workplace. Microsoft's new thrust into schools is in perfect synch with its emphasis on portable technology that parents and students share. "It's a well thought-out program," says Anne Bryant, executive director of the National School Board Assn. (NSBA) in Alexandria, Va., which contributed expertise to Microsoft early on. School districts are struggling to bring parents into the learning process, she points out. "One portable computer per student is every educator's dream."

How big could the new notebook ini-

Getting parents involved is crucial to successful education, and "the response from parents has been phenomenal," says one principal

tiative become? In a word, humongous. About 52 million children are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Another 5 million attend private schools. Every child is a target and every parent a potential cheerleader. "The response from parents has been phenomenal," says Mirian Acosta-Sing, principal of the Mott Hall School for gifted children in Manhattan's District No. 6, which Microsoft has used in videotapes

new initiative. About 20,000 Australian children now tote notebooks to school each day. The teachers' reports from the front lines—conveniently packaged in Microsoft's public-relations material—dazzle American educators. "The children help their friends with difficult programs," exults Ken Rowe, principal of Frankston High School in Melbourne, who is on a whirlwind tour of U.S. schools arranged by Microsoft and Toshiba. "They take control of their own learning."

If America has fallen behind, its high-tech multinationals intend to help it catch up. As Anytime Anywhere spreads, other PC companies are certain to jump on board. Compaq Computer Corp., for one, already has a program in place to make high-end notebooks available to college students at very competitive prices. "This is something we could do in K-12 schools as well," says Sue Collins, Compaq's director for education marketing.

Telecom service companies are also gearing up. Over the next five years, AT&T alone will spend \$150 million to train teachers and help usher more schools into cyberspace. "Today, 45% of private-sector employees must use high-technology tools in the workplace," says Joan Fenwick, director of the AT&T Learning Network, which disburses the funds. In 2000, she says, the number will exceed 60%. "This investment is critical to our economic future."

To help Anytime Anywhere, AT&T has given six months of free Internet service to the Mott Hall School in Harlem. That's a perfect gift for Yaa-Afriyie DuBerry, 10, a laptop-wise African American in the pilot program. She scrolls quickly through a PowerPoint demo of her story on how human beings got taste buds. Pausing for a minute, she defers credit for the animations. "It's clip art," she says. "I only had four days to put it together." Just imagine what she can accomplish in the next 10 years.

By Neil Gross in New York, with bureau reports

SETTING UP A SCHOOL LAPTOP PROGRAM

DOES EVERY CHILD IN THE CLASS NEED A NOTEBOOK?

It helps. Students will use the computers for most subjects at school and to complete assignments at home.

HOW MUCH DOES THE COMPUTER COST?

Typical leases run about \$70 a month, including service and insurance. Purchase prices start at about \$2,000.

WHAT KIND OF HARDWARE IS BEST?

Pilot programs all used Toshiba color laptops, but any durable machine will do. CD-ROM drives and fast modems are recommended.

CAN CHILDREN TAKE CARE OF THEIR LAPTOPS?

To be safe, lease terms should include insurance and provisions for "loaner" machines.

DO TEACHERS NEED SPECIAL TRAINING?

Yes. Australian teachers with the most experience recommend a year of training. Fortunately, children also teach one another.

and brochures to publicize its initiative.

Microsoft's success in the schools is practically guaranteed, say education market analysts, since teachers are already enthusiastic about its Office suite. Quality Education Data—a Denver-based education research firm—did an intent-to-purchase survey before Microsoft even dreamed up Anytime Anywhere. Recalls Jeanne Hayes, president and CEO of QED: "Microsoft Office was at the top of the list."

Australian teachers who have run a similar program for six years are among the most persuasive advocates for the



LINCOLN TRAIL LIBRARIES SYSTEM

Supporting library cooperation in East Central Illinois

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

April 23, 1997

The Honorable Rachelle B. Chong, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW-Room 844
Washington, DC 20544

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Federal Communications Commission

Re: CC Docket #96-45 - Universal Service to Libraries and Schools

Dear Commissioner Chong:

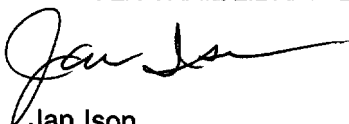
Attached is a copy of a resolution passed by the Board of Directors of the Lincoln Trail Libraries System at its meeting of April 21, 1997 in support of the implementation of meaningful discounted telecommunications rates for public libraries and schools. The proposed discounted rate structure will be a critical factor in assuring full access for our citizens to the Internet and other sources of electronic information, as envisioned by Congress in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and in the Recommended Rules of the Federal-State Joint Board.

Lincoln Trail Libraries System is a multitype library consortium serving 118 member academic, public, school, and special libraries and 424,000 citizens in a 5,900 square mile, 9-county area in East Central Illinois. We coordinate a wide range of cooperative activities designed to facilitate interlibrary resource sharing among libraries in our region. Our member libraries include many small rural libraries serving communities as small as 850 residents. An obstacle to universal access to all citizens is the fact that high-speed telecommunications connections to the Internet are more expensive for the most remote libraries with the least ability to afford them. The discounts under consideration will help to make universal access to information a reality for all.

Thank you for your efforts in working to achieve universal access to the world of electronic information for our citizens and our students. Our citizens and society at large will benefit from the widest possible access to information.

Sincerely,

LINCOLN TRAIL LIBRARIES SYSTEM



Jan Ison
Executive Director

J1/mw
Enclosure

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Resolution of the Board of Directors of Lincoln Trail Libraries System

WHEREAS, in passing the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Congress expressed the intent that libraries and schools should be afforded meaningful discounts for access to the Internet and other online information resources, and

WHEREAS, under the identifying title, CC Docket #96-45 - Universal Service to Libraries and Schools, the Federal Communications Commission has issued Federal-State Joint Board Proposed Rules regarding affordable telecommunications rates for libraries and schools, and


WHEREAS, the proposed rules allow for favorable rates, consisting of 20%-90% discounts to schools and public libraries for high speed telecommunications services and critical non-telecommunications services necessary to assure affordable access to information for our citizens and students, and

WHEREAS, access to affordable telecommunications rates is a critical component to enable schools and public libraries, especially in the rural areas of East Central Illinois, to provide universal access to this wide range of information,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED on April 21, 1997 that the Board of Directors and Staff of Lincoln Trail Libraries System strongly support the recommended discounts on telecommunications rates for schools and libraries as embodied in the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and hereby urge the Federal Communications Commission and the Illinois Commerce Commission to adopt rules implementing such discounts.



SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
LINCOLN TRAIL LIBRARIES SYSTEM


Jerry Goff, President


Jan Ison, Executive Director

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Dr. Robert L. Bastress
Principal

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The Honorable Reed E. Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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MAY 2 1997

RE: CC Docket No.96-45

Dear Chairman Hundt:

As members of the faculty and staff of Liberty High School, Carroll County, Maryland, we wish to express our support for the Universal Service discounts for libraries and schools which have been recommended by the Joint Board.

It is important that libraries and schools have affordable access to the Internet so that everyone has the opportunity to travel the Information Highway. The Telecommunications Act will ensure that all schools, no matter how poor, will be able to connect. The plan will bring services directly to the classroom where students can learn how and where to access information while under the guidance of an informed adult.

At Liberty High School our students have access to the Internet from the Media Center, the writing lab, and data processing lab. However, as our school population is growing rapidly it is important that the opportunities for access continue to expand.

We urge the FCC to fully support the Joint Board's discount plan for universal service for schools and libraries.

Thank you for your attention.

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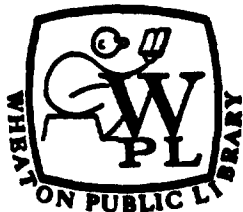
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Theresa Allen - Assistant Principal
Kim Adams, Assistant Principal
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Henry Adams

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Sarah Meisels, Library Director

April 29, 1997

Honorable Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW - Room 844
Washington, DC 20554

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MAY 2 1997

Dear Commissioner Hundt:

Re: CC Docket 96045--Universal Service to Libraries and Schools

On behalf of the Library Board of Trustees of the Wheaton Public Library and the residents of the City of Wheaton, Illinois, I am writing in strong support of the meaningful discounts for libraries and schools as envisioned by the Federal-State Joint Board in their Recommended Rules published last November.

The Recommended Rules allow libraries and schools significant discounts for telecommunications and critical, non-telecommunications services necessary to assure that all public libraries and schools are connected to the Internet and other on-line resources that are critical to living and working in an increasingly information-driven world.

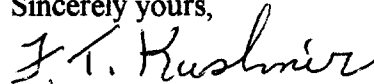
Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 with the clear intent of insuring that libraries and schools would be able to access the latest technology. By allowing significant discounts on telecommunications services, local wiring and Internet access, the Joint Board has accurately recognized the needs of poorer schools and libraries that cannot afford the internal wiring necessary to connect with the Internet. By allowing telecommunications companies and non-telco carriers to compete for the discounts, the Joint Board has also recognized the need for technologies to serve the diverse urban and rural areas of the country.

Favorable telecommunication rates are extremely important to libraries in order to access for their patrons the wealth of information available on the Internet. Libraries are particularly challenged in this decade, as they must provide both traditional library services and offer access to electronic information sources, all at a time when many library budgets are declining.

The Wheaton Public Library is among those libraries working hard to offer the latest in library technology in a community that expects it. We provide access to on-line databases with our direct Internet connection, because the currency of information is very important. Installing a direct connection is expensive. Paying monthly Internet access charges and charges for the line is expensive. It is a heavy burden on the library budget, and we would welcome more favorable rates, as would libraries far poorer than we are. In Wheaton, the public access Internet stations we offer are heavily used by recent graduates and older adults seeking information about employment opportunities and economic betterment. I venture to say those would be prime uses in all U.S. communities.

Thank you for your concern in this very important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "F. T. Kushnir".

F. T. Kushnir, President
Library Board of Trustees



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Cheryl L. Parrino, Chairman
Daniel J. Eastman, Commissioner
Joseph P. Mettner, Commissioner

610 North Whitney Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

April 28, 1997

BY FAX & BY MAIL

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MAY 2 1997

Chairman Reed Hundt
Commissioner James Quello
Commissioner Susan Ness
Commissioner Rachelle Chong
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington DC 20554

Re: In the Matter of Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

Dear Chairman Hundt:

Next week you will be making one of the most important decisions on telecommunications since divestiture. Structuring a universal service plan to assure reasonably available and affordable services to all is a challenge, and your determinations will be critical to the entire nation.

The universal service decision will address many issues, on most of which there are divergent points of view. All the issues are complex or controversial. I would like to share some brief observations and opinions on a few of these items.

Proxy Models

I understand the goal of proxy models as used in the universal service context is to simplify the process of determining costs. Based on experience, I recognize that cost studies are expensive and can be time intensive from a regulatory perspective. I would like to see a process that minimizes costs and regulatory intervention; however, I agree with Joint Board Commissioner Julia Johnson that none of the proxies in this proceeding is ready for use. On this matter, I urge you not to make a final decision. As this whole cost issue is examined in the months ahead, I would encourage the FCC (and the continuing Joint Board) to consider more reliance on state commission efforts to identify the costs of service.

Transition Plan

I support the position of the state members of the Joint Board that encourages use of the alternative transition plan as part of the overall universal service decision. The initial Joint Board decision presents a grave potential to harm rural areas and actually diminish universal service. The alternative plan maintains more support for rural areas and companies. It offers continued incentives for infrastructure investment, avoids an immediate potential for local rate increases, and supports expanded service and growth in the rural areas.

The various provisions of the transition plan, including continued universal service support for second residential lines and business lines, will protect universal service in all parts of the nation.

The Universal Service Challenge

I am very aware of the challenge this case presents. As a commissioner for several years, I have been in your shoes as you attempt to minimize costs while maintaining support for the many goals encompassed in the concept of universal service. I believe attention to meeting these goals is of paramount importance. Meeting all these needs may require a measured and reasoned approach that recognizes all goals may not be achievable at once. The impacts of these universal service provisions on local rates could be so high as to negate the very intentions of the universal service fund programs. It would be the ultimate irony if steps taken to protect and promote universal service were in fact a contributor to its downfall.

Joint Boards

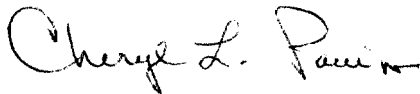
The Joint Board process is not painless, but it works. I support continued reliance on this process to shepherd further universal service changes. I applaud the public comments by Chairman Hundt on a commitment to ongoing Joint Board involvement. The work of the separations Joint Board—in process now—will be a critical input in the ongoing evaluation of universal service.

Access Charges

Some access charge reductions are needed; however, careful weighing of goals is required. Overzealous access charge reductions could jeopardize support for rural areas and low income customers and increase pressures for increases in local rates.

In conclusion, I support your efforts and recognize your challenge. I encourage you to consider these comments as you deliberate these important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Cheryl L. Parrino".

Cheryl L. Parrino
Chairman

CLP:GAE:jah:h:\ss\letter\FCCJoint BdUSF-4-28-97-GAE

cc: Brad. Ramsay, NARUC
John F O'Neal, NRTA
Michael E. Brunner, NTCA
John N. Rose, OPASTCO
Roy M. Neel, USTA
Governor Tommy G. Thompson

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CC96-45

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April 28, 1997

Reed E. Hundt
Chair
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554-0001

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MAY 2 1997

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the physician groups listed below, which represent over 300,000 individual physicians from across the country, we are writing to urge you to support the full implementation of the "universal service" provisions of the "Telecommunications Act of 1996." As you know, the universal service provisions of the Act mandate the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to direct telecommunications rate subsidies to, among other groups, "rural health care providers." The law explicitly states that the FCC must make telecommunications rates for eligible health care providers and physicians comparable to telecommunications rates for similar services in both urban and rural areas. We strongly encourage you to immediately implement the so-called Snowe, Rockefeller, Exon, Kerrey provisions of the Act because we believe it to be important to the growth of telemedicine and would allow for greater access to health care services in rural and underserved areas.

The Act specifically mandates that telecommunications carriers provide telecommunications services to health care providers serving patients in rural areas at rates comparable to rates in urban areas. In addition, the FCC's own Advisory Committee on Telecommunications and Health Care has stated that the "discounted rate is critical to the success of rural telemedicine, and the comparable urban rate should eliminate differences in urban and rural rates created by distance." As Congress intended, we believe the definition of "rate" should be construed broadly.

Many dedicated physicians and health care professionals provide essential medical services in small private offices, often in remote and isolated areas across the country. In order to be able to continue to provide quality health care services, individuals practicing in rural areas must often pay excessively high long-distance charges just to be able to access Internet and other telecommunications services. The ability to access these and many other services at affordable rate would allow physicians and health care providers to deliver the best health services possible.

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We urge you to support the “universal access” provisions of the Act because we believe that these provisions are fair and would improve the quality of health services in many needed areas of the United States.

Sincerely,

American College of Radiology

American Medical Association

cc: James H. Quello, Rachelle B. Chong, Susan Ness, Regina M. Keeney



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CC 94-45

BEVERLY L. MALONE, PhD, RN, FAAN
PRESIDENT

GERI MARULLO, MSN, RN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 24, 1997

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

The Honorable Reed Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

RECEIVED
MAY 2 1997

Dear Chairman Hundt:

On behalf of America's 2.2 million registered nurses, the American Nurses Association is pleased to provide comments on the Federal Communication Commission's Universal Service Proceeding, which is part of the implementation of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

Advances in telecommunications technology offers great opportunities for improving access to and quality of health care, especially in rural areas. Cost barriers, however, often prevent those who need these services from receiving them. Nursing is dedicated to providing high quality health care to all Americans. ANA has been increasingly involved in exploring telehealth as a tool for providing health care to those who otherwise would not receive care.

ANA supports the universal service provisions of the Act, which mandate the FCC to direct universal service subsidies to schools, libraries, and rural health care providers. In particular, we are supportive of the provisions of the Act under which the FCC must make telecommunications rates for non-profit and public rural health care providers reasonably comparable to telecommunications rates in urban areas. Telehealth can greatly improve the quality and lessen the costs of health care in rural areas, but only if telecommunications rates for telehealth applications can be lowered to within the range of rates for similar services in urban areas.

ANA supports the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications and Health Care. Specifically, nursing believes that rural health care providers should be eligible for subsidized rates for telecommunications services of their choice at band widths up to and including 1.54 Mbps. The Act says universal service subsidies should be applied to those telecommunications services "necessary for the provision of health care services." Health care providers should decide for themselves which services are "necessary." Since eligible health care providers would pay rates comparable to those in urban areas, they would have every incentive to use the least expensive services capable of fulfilling their needs. The fact that providers would not necessarily opt for bandwidth at the 1.54 Mbps level, and would not be able to obtain subsidized rates for services of bandwidth above the 1.54 Mbps level, would act as an added cost control mechanism.

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THE US MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES • AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



The Honorable Reed Hundt
April 24, 1997

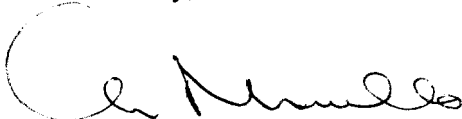
Page 2

Eligible health care providers should not pay distance-based charges for telecommunications services. According to the sponsors of the health care provisions of the Act, elimination of the distance components of telecommunications charges is necessary to accomplish the intent of the Act.

Universal service should support toll free access to the Internet for eligible rural health care providers. The Internet is a valuable tool for the provision of many health care services, particularly in the area of public health. Health care providers use it to exchange information and advice, to follow changes in their fields, and to access databases such as the National Library of Medicine's Grateful Med. Urban users do not have to pay long toll charges to reach internet service providers, but rural users often do. Eligible rural health care providers should receive support to help pay toll charges if they cannot connect to the Internet via a local call.

Thank you for taking the views of our nation's registered nurses into account when you consider this issue. If you or your staff have any questions about ANA's position on this issue, please feel free to contact K. Reeder Franklin, Assistant Director of Federal Government Relations at ANA, at (202) 651-7097.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Geri Marullo", is written over a faint circular outline.

Geri Marullo, MSN, RN
Executive Director



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NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

April 30, 1997

Reed E. Hundt
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M st. N.W. #814
Washington, D.C. 20554

MAY 2 1997

Re: CC Docket No. 96-45
Ex Parte Communications

Dear Chairman Hundt,

We are communicating with you as the respective Chairs of the New York State Assembly Corporations, Authorities and Commissions Committee and the Libraries and Educational Technology Committee. We also serve as Co-Chairs of the Temporary Task Force on Telecommunications of the New York State Assembly. Over the past two sessions, it has been our intention to educate and inform as we develop a consensus on issues of high legislative priority in the context of the fast changing environment of telecommunications.

As you are aware, this is not the first time for filings from the New York State Assembly in the matter of the Joint Federal/State Board on Universal Service. Assemblyman Albert Vann's comments have been in the role of his Chairmanship of the Telecommunications & Energy Committee of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. Assemblyman Vann also had the opportunity to work with you on this issue during the Aspen Institute's Communications & Society Seminar on Universal Service last summer.

To that end, as we approach the May 8, 1997 deadline for the FCC response to the Joint Board recommendations, We would like to take this opportunity to emphasize consensus issues that are of concern to the Assembly Task Force.

--In the development of a Universal Service funding mechanism, maximum flexibility must be given to the states through full access to intrastate revenues to fashion state-based universal service policies.

--Coordination flexibility should be given to states that have comprehensive strategies to manage school & library discounts. Such strategies must include procedures to insure participation by schools and libraries serving distressed areas.

--Health care facilities that serve inner city neighborhoods and rural health care facilities should be given equal priority.

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--As an overall policy, the FCC must recognize that disadvantaged schools and libraries will not be prepared to take immediate advantage of the discounts. The current formulations of the Joint Board's proposal does not take this into account. Efforts must be made to provide technical assistance and training in order for educational technology initiatives to swiftly take hold.

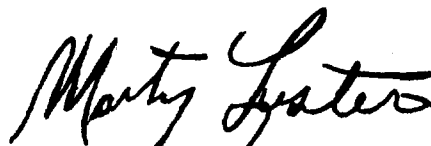
As we move forward with our efforts to establish consensus and develop helpful strategies we hope to continue this dialogue on these issues and others that may arise. In closing we would also like to emphasize that the Universal Service fund must be of sufficient size to support the maintenance and advanced upgrade of the ubiquitous public switched network that the American public has come to expect.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Albert Vann
Chair, Assembly Committee on
Corporations, Authorities & Commissions



Martin A. Luster
Chair, Assembly Committee on
Libraries & Educational Technology

cc: Assemblyman Sheldon Silver Speaker
Assemblywoman RoAnn M. Destito
Assemblyman Thomas P. DiNapoli
Assemblyman David F. Gantt
Assemblyman Anthony J. Genovesi
Assemblyman Roger L. Green
Assemblywoman Melinda Katz
Assemblywoman Naomi Matusow
Assemblyman Joseph Morelle
Assemblyman Felix Ortiz
Assemblyman Peter M. Rivera
Assemblyman Steven Sanders
Assemblyman William Scarborough
Assemblyman Robin L. Schimminger
Assemblyman Edward C. Sullivan
Assemblyman Robert Sweeney
Commissioner Rachelle Chong
Commissioner Susan Ness
Commissioner James Quello
Secretary William Caton (two copies)

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96-45
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May 1, 1997

The Honorable Susan Ness, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW Suite 844
Washington, DC 20554

RECEIVED

MAY 2 1997

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioner Ness:

The American Hospital Association, on behalf of its 5,000 member hospitals and health systems urges you to fully implement the intent of health care access provisions of the federal Universal Support mechanism required by the Snowe-Rockefeller amendments of the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996.

Eliminate Distance Charges

The law was written to ensure "rates comparable" for rural health care networks to those available to their urban counterparts. In our opinion, allowing continuation of distance-sensitive rates would violate the intent of the statute, making equal access to health care services via telecommunications virtually impossible in many rural areas. Please eliminate or offset the effect of distance-based charges so that valuable telehealth projects may be implemented equally for all Americans.

Internet Access

Increasingly, teaching and training, community health education, public health and other clinical health services are becoming available via multimedia desktop applications over the internet. At the same time, rural health care providers must pay significantly more for long distance and related charges to gain internet access. As you consider the range of modalities and technologies available to health care networks under the Universal Services provision, we urge that you allow rural providers to gain internet access at urban dial-up rates.

Washington, DC Center for Public Affairs

Chicago, Illinois Center for Health Care Leadership

Liberty Place, Suite 700
325 Seventh Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20004-2802
(202) 638-1100

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Qualifying Institutions

Within telehealth networks, many of the reference or consulting institutions are actually located in urban areas-- though they are providing service to their rural counterparts. We urge that the final order consider the various hub and spoke and or multi-point networks which are emerging, recognizing that many of these largely rural networks include one or more academic health centers or other urban-based facilities. A link between a rural and urban facility should be deemed service to a rural area eligible for rate relief in the commission's final order.

On behalf of the nation's hospitals and health care systems, I want to thank you in advance for your hard work in implementing these worthwhile provisions, and offer our ongoing support on these and related matters. Let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



James Bentley
Senior Vice President for Policy